

2/22/2022

Good afternoon Honorable Co-chairs Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee.

My name is Sena Wazer and I am Senior at the University of Connecticut, where I am studying Environmental Studies. I am also a lifelong CT resident, having grown up and currently living in Mansfield. Thank you for this opportunity to speak regarding HB 5037, An Act Adjusting the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2023, and specifically continued state funding for the University of Connecticut.

Like many students I started at one of our state's community colleges, attending Manchester Community College for two years, where I completed many general education requirements. From there, I transferred to UConn, because of the programs that it offers in my area of interest.

While I originally transferred into UConn as a Marine Sciences major, I switched almost immediately to Environmental Sciences, and then again to Environmental Studies. While this might seem like a lot of switching, I am grateful that UConn provides these options, so that students are able to find the major that most interests them. In my case, environmental studies, which focus on how environmental issues affect people, and what kind of policy solutions are available.

In the past two years especially, I have been privileged to take part in multiple programs that the university offers, which have helped me grow as a leader, and person. Last year I was a part of the UConn Leadership Legacy program, which helped me, along with 12 other students, grow as people and leaders. In the fall, I had the opportunity to attend the UN Climate Change Conference—COP26, which happened in Scotland—as part of the UConn delegation. And last year, UConn's Office of National Scholarships nominated and supported me as I applied for, and received, the Truman Scholarship.

My point with all of this is to demonstrate the opportunities that UConn has provided to me and my peers, which would not be possible without state funding. State funding is critical to ensure that UConn is able to stay financially accessible for as many students as possible, while also preserving and enhancing education and research quality. With over [60% of employed UConn graduates](#) choosing to stay and work in CT, funding UConn is also a wise investment in our state's future.

As a young person, and especially as a young climate activist, I hear all too often that young people will save our planet, that we will bring around positive change, and that we give people hope. However, to do any of those things we need to be invested in, and one way of doing that is to invest in our universities.

As such, I hope you will continue funding UConn and ensuring that students are able to receive the quality education they deserve.

Sincerely,
Sena Wazer